



Kick it up a notch with this action-packed theme that celebrates skill, discipline, fitness, confidence, and the positive mindset of martial arts.

SETTING THE SCENE

Dojo Reading Corner. Define a space with exercise mats on the floor. Decorate the front wall with a “Kick it Up” theme poster, individual “Kick it Up” character reproducibles (see pages 6–9), or a traditional-looking gong. Post your own version of *Dojo Kun* (rules for your “Kick it Up!” readers), like those in *Geronimo Stilton: The Karate Mouse* from the bibliography on page 5. A suspended bag or dummy for hitting and punching lends authenticity, if you dare! Add a dressmaker’s dummy or coat rack displaying a martial arts *gi* (uniform) along with belts in several colors. Complete the effect with a small basket or tray of books on the subject.

Bulletin Board. Display a world map on a black or red background. We think of martial arts as being Asian in origin, but many cultures have developed their own martial arts. Use ribbon to connect countries of origin to words and pictures of their cultural forms of martial art, like Nguni Stick Fighting to South Africa. This website is a good resource: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_martial_arts.

Book Display. Display books, magazines, and videos from your collection that feature martial arts under a “Kick it Up!” poster. Add plush toys or actions figures ready to spar in martial arts gis, like those you’ll find at www.martialartspartystore.com/maarlistbe.html,

www.alibaba.com/showroom/martial-arts-toy.html, or the sites mentioned in Incentives below.

Incentives. Lay in a stock of small items as reading incentives or prizes for game winners. Use themed book-marks and stickers. Go to www.birthdayinabox.com for stickers, small ninja action figures, karate pencils, small treat bags, cups, napkins, and dragon temp tattoos. For a more substantial prize, Lego makes martial arts collectible minifigures.

GAMES/CONTESTS

Black Belt Readers. Along with using the “Kick it Up!” Reading Record to track individual reading goals and accomplishments, set group goals for total number of titles or minutes read to advance your group of learners collectively from one belt to the next. Use the Reading Record as the model for a poster showing group goals and progress. How about dressing up a stuffed hamster or other plush animal in a simple gi and changing colored belts as the title total rises? Check out the gi made for a doll or plush toy at www.martialartspartystore.com/maarunforpls.html, or look in aforementioned Book Display ideas for plush karate animals.

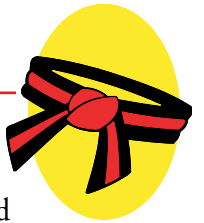
Martial Arts Relay. Set up and explain a relay course that challenges kids to complete physical tasks of strength or agility. Include activities like rolling under or jumping over obstacles, kicking or hitting a punching dummy, crawling using only hands and arms, walking a masking tape line on the floor, etc. Line kids up individually or in teams to take the challenge. At your signal, the first child will put on a large gi jacket and belt over his or her clothes, complete the course, and remove the gi. The child or team that completes the course fastest is the winner.

Martial Arts Matching Game. Set out copies of the reproducible Martial Arts Matching Game from page 10, which familiarizes learners with common martial arts terms. Make the Martial Arts Dictionary from pages 11–13 available for reference, as well as other resources if available.

Animal Movement. In kung fu, students imitate the movements of animals to develop style, skill, strength, discipline, and grace. Gather small children and invite them to move like animals—tigers, snakes, cranes, leopards, dragons, monkeys, etc. Instrumental music chosen to suggest each animal’s movements helps children get into the spirit of the exercise.

ARTS/CRAFTS

Cordões (Capoeira “belts”). Gather a supply of thin rope in blue, green, and yellow. The amount per belt depends on the rope and the size of the children, so you’ll want to experiment in advance. The braided belts traditionally wrap twice around the waist. So if you want them to be authentic, you’ll double the length of rope for each belt, which should already be about 50% longer than the desired finished length of the belt to accommodate braiding. Create the belts by tying off three lengths of rope near one end, braiding them evenly, and tying off again near the other end. Introduce the book *Capoeira: Game! Dance! Martial Art!* Then braid cordões in different color combinations, which indicate different skill levels. Read about the colors and related skill levels at www.cdohi.com/graduation.html.



Capoeira Music. Introduce *Capoeira: Game! Dance! Martial Art!*, focusing on the pages that describe the special instruments used. Listen to selections from the Air Mail Music recording listed on page 5. Better yet, find a capoeira group near you and invite them to demonstrate the instruments and music.

Headbands. Tie dye or use fabric markers to make personalized headbands to wear during martial arts workouts. Start with white cotton headbands, bandanas, or even large men’s handkerchiefs. You’ll find instructions for dyeing in many craft books or online.



Paper Crafts. Try Activity Village Samurai helmet and sword projects at www.activityvillage.co.uk/samurai_helmet_craft.htm and www.activityvillage.co.uk/samurai_sword_craft.htm, a cardboard tube karate kid at www.dltk-kids.com/sports/mkarate.html, or a cardboard tube karate monkey at www.kraftykid.com/karate-monkey-paper-roll-craft-printables.

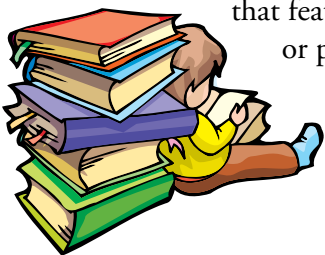
Modeling Clay Sparring Figures. For older kids, check out instructions for making martial arts action figures from clay at Crayola's website: www.crayola.com/crafts/detail/black-belt-broken-boards-craft.

WRITING PROJECTS

Martial Arts Dictionary. Set copies of *Geronimo Stilton: The Karate Mouse* and *Three Samurai Cats* at a center with paper, crayons, and a computer for research. Post an invitation for kids to help you make a martial arts dictionary by creating illustrated entries for related words and phrases. Provide a sample (see pages 11–13) and several blank copies of the form on page 14. Compile entries into a loose-leaf notebook for display and possible processing into your collection.

“Empty Hand” Essays. The word “karate” translates in Japanese to mean “empty hand.” Invite kids to search library resources and write one-page essays about the history of the word and what it tells us about the purpose and practice of karate today. Display the essays with appropriate pictures and calligraphic versions of the two Chinese characters that make up the word. If you host a martial arts demonstration as part of your theme, invite a few essayists to read their compositions at the event. Try the same process for other martial arts like tae kwon do or judo. Chapter 1 of *The Kids’ Karate Workbook* is a good starting point.

Creative Writing Challenge. Introduce several books that feature short stories, cartoons, or poems about martial arts. You’ll find examples in the bibliography on page 5. Challenge children to create original poems, stories,



or cartoons about using martial arts for personal defense, fitness, or confidence building.

Regional Tall Tales. Display and share some tall tales, set in different regions of the country. Invite kids to think about natural landmarks in your state and make up a bigger-than-life character to star in an original tall tale about how those landmarks came to be.

Imaginary Itinerary. Encourage imaginative thinking by inviting kids to make up a fictional destination for their reading road trip. It might be their own dream version of a Disney theme park, a national park featuring a fantasy natural landmark, a city designed entirely for kids, etc. They will write short speeches to encourage people to visit their imaginary destinations.

FOODS/RECIPES

Healthy Snacks for Harmony and Balance. A basic tenet of most martial arts is that we find our greatest power in the harmony and balance of body, mind, and spirit. Serve simple, natural snacks that reflect that tenet, like fruit, cheese, or whole grain crackers.

Candy Sushi. Check out this unusual nod to martial arts’ Asian roots. It’s less healthy, but fun just the same: www.birthdaydirect.com/martial-arts-party-supplies-c-1076_3008.html. Scroll down to instructions for making the sweet treat.

Punch, of Course! Any flavor will do, as long as it packs a punch!



SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

Martial Arts Physics. Explore forces in motion in the martial arts—center of gravity, inertia, momentum, potential and kinetic energy, etc. Start by clicking on the video at www.sciencebuddies.org/science-fair-projects/project_ideas/Sports_p020.shtml. You can stop after the experiment or continue to watch learning in action during tournament sparring. Then go back to the article and follow instructions to conduct your own experiments. The only special equipment you'll need is a hanging or upright karate kick boxing bag, which you might be able to borrow from a local dojo or gym.

Martial Arts Physics. Introduce animals whose movements inspire styles of kung fu, like the tiger, crane, praying mantis, monkey, and snake. Kids who have seen the movie *Kung Fu Panda* will recognize these. Use library resources to learn about their life cycles and characteristics. Share what you learn by making a group poster that shows these animals along with basic information about where and how long they live, what they eat, and a picture of students of kung fu in poses characteristic of them.

MATH ACTIVITIES

Karate Counting Book. Work together to write and illustrate a counting book with a martial arts theme. You might show one sensei, two pieces to a traditional gi, three students performing a kata, etc. Also include the Japanese word for each number.

Sumo Weight Problems. According to an article in *Dimensions* online magazine, the average Japanese sumo wrestler weighs 412 pounds! Use that astounding number as the basis for math problems for kids to solve.

For example, how much is that in kilograms? (About 187.) How many “copies” of an average third grader would it take to make up one average sumo wrestler? If a beginning sumo wrestler weighs 180 pounds and wants to reach average size in a year, how many pounds must he gain each month? If an average sumo is 5’11” tall, how much does he weigh per inch of height? Per centimeter? Once you get the ball rolling, have kids help you make up more sumo weight math problems and enjoy solving them together. Follow up by reading *Sumo Mouse*.

Karate Counting Book. Read *The Lost Key: A Mystery with Whole Numbers*. Talk about how the characters use math to solve the mystery and recover the stolen martial arts equipment. Come up with variations of the problems used in the story and have kids do the calculations.

INTERNET ACTIVITIES

Martial Arts Tenets Poem. <http://members.cox.net/marvlf/tenpoem.htm>. Kids can read about the character traits that are important in martial arts, in rhyme.

Capoeira Demonstration. Watch slides and a video of Cordão De Ouro’s visit to a Kalamazoo, Michigan library to demonstrate many aspects of the Afro-Brazilian martial art of capoeira: www.kpl.gov/news/blog/?id=26044.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Dojo Field Trip. Make arrangements to visit a local dojo for a tour and introduction to its programs. Martial arts schools and instructors vary greatly, so be sure to seek recommendations from patrons you trust to identify a school that works positively and constructively with children, and encourage a focus in the presentation on character development and conflict avoidance.



Martial Arts Demonstration/Introductory Class.

In the same spirit, invite an appropriate sensei to visit, introduce the idea of martial arts for fitness and character building, demonstrate skills, and lead the group in simple warm-up exercises and basic forms. Stress martial arts etiquette; use the “Mind Your Manners” box on page 6 of Crossingham’s *Judo in Action*.

Travelogue. Has someone in your community taken interesting road trips to explore the country? Invite these veteran travelers to come and share souvenirs, pictures, and stories from their journeys. This could be a family event with refreshments that reflect the tastes of regions featured in the presentation.

Tourist Fashion Show. Try this by itself or use it as a fun extension of another program. Invite kids to come dressed in their best interpretation of tourist attire. They might dress for hot or cold climates; adopt the classic tropical explorer’s garb (pith helmet and all); or simply go for maximum silliness, with sunglasses, ill-matched shirt and shorts, camera around the neck, etc.

“KICK IT UP” RESOURCES

- *Air Mail Music: Brazil Capoeira* by Various Artists. Playasound, 2004. ASIN B0001Z536K. All ages.
- *Be Water, My Friend: The Early Years of Bruce Lee* by Ken Mochizuki. Lee & Low Books, 2006. 1584302658. 2-5.
- *Bokuden and the Bully: A Japanese Folktale* adapted by Stephen Krensky. First Avenue Editions, 2009. 1580138470. 1-3.
- *Brendan Buckley’s Universe and Everything in It* by Sundee T. Frazier. Yearling, 2008. 044042206X. 4-6.
- *Capoeira: Game! Dance! Martial Art!* by George Ancona. Lee & Low Books, 2007. 1584302682. 2-6.
- *Chip and the Karate Kick* by Anne Rockwell. HarperCollins, 2004. 0060284420. P-2.
- *Doc Wilde and the Frogs of Doom* by Tim Byrd. G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2009. 0399247831. 4-6.
- *Dragon Breath: Attack of the Ninja Frogs* by Ursula Vernon. Dial, 2010. 0803733658. 3-5.



- *Happy Birthday, Gus!* by Jacklyn Williams. Picture Window Books, 2006. 140481261X. 1-3.
- *Judo in Action* by John Crossingham and Bobbie Kalman. Crabtree, 2005. 0778703622. 4-6. See other martial arts in this Sports in Action series also.
- *The Karate Class Mystery* by Elizabeth Levy. Cartwheel, 1996. 059060323X. 2-3.
- “Karate Kid” by Jane Yolen, from *Opening Days: Sports Poems* selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins. Harcourt Children’s Books, 1996. 0152002707. 1-5. Out of print, but widely available.
- *The Karate Kid* directed by Harald Zwart. Sony Pictures, 2010 (DVD feature film, PG rating for violent fight sequences). ASIN: B002ZG99CC. 4+.
- *The Karate Mouse* (Geronimo Stilton, No. 40) by Geronimo Stilton. Scholastic, 2010. 054510369X. 3-5.
- *The Kids’ Karate Workbook: A Take-Home Training Guide for Young Martial Artists* by Didi Goodman. Blue Snake Books, 2009. 1583942335. 4-6.
- *Kung Fu* by Tim O’Shei. Capstone Press, 2008. 1429619635. 1-3. See other books in this Martial arts series also.
- *Kung Fu Panda* directed by John Stevenson and Mark Osborne. Dreamworks Animated, 2008 (DVD feature film, PG rating for violent fight sequences). ASIN B001ECQ6YW. 3+.
- *The Lost Key: A Mystery with Whole Numbers* by Melinda Thielbar. Graphic Universe, 2010. 3-5. Other titles in this series also feature mathematical problem solving by kung fu students.
- *Meet My Neighbor, the Taekwondo Master* by Marc Crabtree. Crabtree Publishing, 2009. 0778745821. K-2.
- *Samurai: Warlords of Japan* by Arlan Dean. Children’s Press, 2005. 0516250884. 4-6.
- *Sumo Mouse* by David Wisniewski. Chronicle Books, 2002. 0811834921. K-3.
- *Tae Kwon Do!* by Terry Pierce. Random House Books for Young Readers, 2006. 0375834486. P-1.
- *Three Samurai Cats: A Story from Japan* retold by Eric A. Kimmel. Holiday House, 2004. 0823418774. K-4.
- *Tiger (The Five Ancestors, Book 1)* by Jeff Stone. Yearling, 2006. 0375830723. 5+.
- *Wink: The Ninja Who Wanted to Be Noticed* by J. C. Phillips. Viking Juvenile, 2009. 0670010928. K-3.





Use your skills-
READ!





**Reading is the
best defense!**

Martial Arts Matching Game

Directions:

Draw lines matching each martial arts term to the picture that it goes with.

Sensei

Obi

Dojo

Gi

Tsuki (punch)

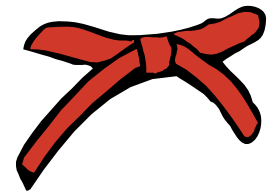
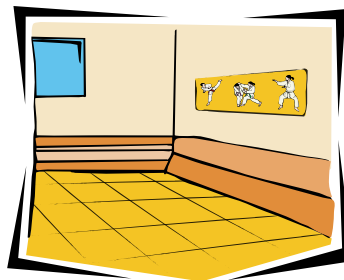
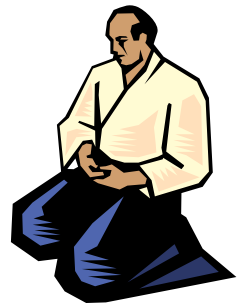
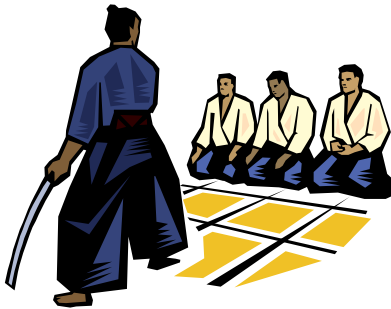
Ich, ni, san, shi

Kumite (spar)

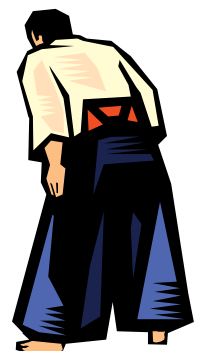
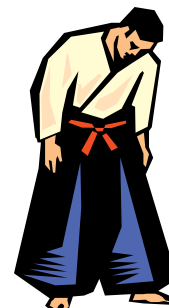
Seiza (kneel)

Rei (bow)

Geri (kick)



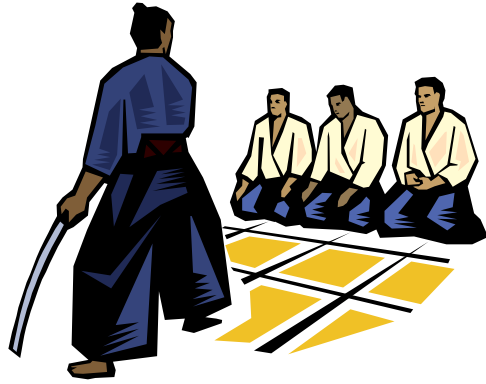
1 2 3 4



Martial Arts Dictionary Sample

Word or Phrase: Sensei

Meaning: The formal way to address a teacher,
instructor or mentor in the Japanese martial arts
(such as karate or judo) as well as authority figures.



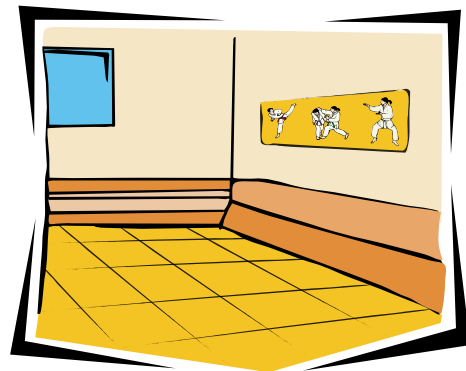
Word or Phrase: Obi

Meaning: A sash or belt worn with a kimono or
with the uniforms used by practitioners of Japanese
martial arts.



Word or Phrase: Dojo

Meaning: A training hall for traditional Japanese
arts, including Aikido and other martial arts. Literally,
“do” means way and “jo” means place or the “place
of the Way”.



Word or Phrase: Gi

Meaning: A gi is a uniform for training in martial
arts. Also known as a dogi or keikogi. Derived
from the Japanese words budo (martial arts), keiko
(practice) and gi (dress or clothes).



Martial Arts Dictionary Sample

Word or Phrase: Tsuki

Meaning: A punch or thrust. Variations include:

rising punch (age tsuki), reverse punch (gyaku

tsuki), straight punch (seiken tsuki), lunge punch

(oi tsuki), and side punch (tate tsuki).



Word or Phrase: Ichi, Ni, Son, Shi

Meaning: Numbers one through four in Japanese.

One (1) is "ichi" (pronounced "eechee" - but a little
short on the "ee"); two (2) is "ni" (pronounced as in
"knee"); three (3) is "san" (close to "son"); and four
(4) is 'shi' (pronounced "she").



Word or Phrase: Kumite

Meaning: Sparring. Kumite is one of the three
main sections of karate training, along with kata
and kihon. Kumite is the part of karate in which
you train against an adversary, using the techniques
learned from the kihon and kata.



Martial Arts Dictionary Sample

Word or Phrase: Seiza

Meaning: Position taken during rest or while
waiting orders, before or during training. One sits
on his heels, with the dorsal part of the feet in
contact with the ground, just like the knees. Facing
the front, the person's back is completely straight,
like "a smoke column that rises on a calm day",
looking always to the front.



Word or Phrase: Rei

Meaning: "Respect, veneration". Part of each
etiquette, it consists of a bow (with the inclination
of the superior part of the body) to the opponent,
before and after each training. It can be done
standing or during Seiza.



Word or Phrase: Geri

Meaning: A kick. Variations include: stomp kick
(fumikomi geri), front snap kick (mae geri keage),
front thrust kick (mae geri kekomi), flying front kick
(mae tobi geri), side snap kick (yoko geri keage),
side thrust kick (yoko geri kekomi), back kick (ushiro
geri), roundhouse kick (mawashi geri), crescent kick
(mikazuki geri), and double jump kick (nihon tobi geri).



Martial Arts Dictionary

Word or Phrase: _____

Meaning: _____

Word or Phrase: _____

Meaning: _____

Word or Phrase: _____

Meaning: _____
